

THIS

2561

PROBLEM



Part I: What has to be done

CHAPTER 3

No trees or open space

River frontage wasted

Houses mixed with factories

Unhealthy

Yours truly,

لا يجوز

5000

Minister of Health
April 1944

the value

504-505

Verfahren mit der Maschine

Disinfectant used

Garden:

2

Parke and Sons

Environ. Sci. Technol. 1991, 25, 1000-1005

1000

Health

Tennis

مجلس

play or event
School not at
present

New residential
squares

Gardens

مجلس

1

12/12/19

FOREWORD

This new course of six chapters discusses our housing problem—what it is and what we should do about it.

From time to time new chapters will be added to the course in order to tell you what progress Australia has made and proposes to make in her planning to cope with this big post-war problem.

The Australian Army Education Service has had invaluable assistance in preparing the text and illustrations of this course.

Thanks are due to Mr. Oswald Barnett, of Melbourne; Mr. J. F. D. Scarborough, architect, of Melbourne; Mr. Frank Heath, architect, of Melbourne; Mr. Shum, editor of the Home Beautiful; the Housing Commission of N.S.W.; the Housing Commission of Victoria; the Ministry of Post-war Reconstruction; and Consolidated Press Ltd., Sydney.

Acknowledgment is due also to these various publications: *Town Planning*, by Thomas Sharp, and *Living in Towns*, by Ralph Tubbs (both Penguin Books); *The Modern Flat*, by F. R. S. Yorke and Frederick Gibberd (Architectural Press: London); *Houses We Live In* (Ministry of Health: London); *City Planning Housing*, by Werner Hegemann (Architectural Book Publishing Co.: New York); *Housing For Health* (Opportunity Club Publication: Melbourne); and *Wanted! A Plan!* (a Report submitted by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects).

THIS HOUSING PROBLEM

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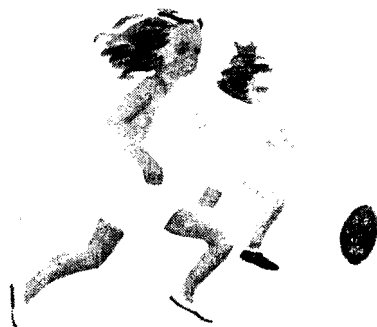
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*The soul of a nation is in the
homes of the people.*
—Tryst.

R.A.A.F. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

PART 1

What has to be done

THIS

PROBLEM

CHAPTER 3

SLUMS

**How big are they?
How they affect people.**

We don't know exactly, because no Commonwealth housing survey has been made, but the estimate of 46,000 unfit and sub-standard houses made by F. Oswald Barnett and W. O. Burt is probably near the mark. And that figure does not include many thousands of near-slum dwellings. President Roosevelt said recently, "One-third of America is badly housed."

There have been a number of sectional surveys in Australia. Their facts will give us a cross-section of general conditions. These surveys were used with other data by Barnett and Burt. Let's look at some of them.

Victorian slums

The Housing and Slum Abolition Board of Victoria, in a report to the Victorian Parliament in October, 1937, gave the results of a house survey and social census of 7,330 houses in which 25,000 persons were living. These houses were within five miles of the Melbourne General Post Office. The Board found that in every 100 houses:

- 56 were in bad condition externally.
- 28 had leaking roofs, due mainly to rusted iron and displaced and broken slates.
- 32 had no bathrooms.
- 51 had no washhouses.
- 88 had no kitchen sink, or water laid on to kitchens.
- 11.7 were overcrowded.

Most of the houses had unsound floors, poor lighting and ventilation, while others were unfit to live in because of dampness.

50 had ceilings eight feet high or less.

40 were overrun by rats, and 16 were vermin infested.

The Board found, too:

5,742 families living in the 7,330 houses earned aggregate average incomes of £3/1/8 a week.

3,119 families living in 3,046 houses, classed as unfit to live in averaged a total income of £2/10/4 a week.

43.5 per cent. of the inhabitants of these slums were children.

Rents of the houses classed as unfit to live in averaged 11/2d. a week—22.5 per cent. of the aggregate family income.

Surveys of country towns

The Board also surveyed housing conditions in some Victorian country areas, particularly Shepparton and Mildura. Shepparton has 7,700 people and, including the district, 16,000. Its income from primary and secondary industries is £2,000,000 a year. Mildura has 8,000 people and, including the district, 27,000. Its primary and secondary industries return £3,000,000 a year. These are typical large Victorian country towns.

The Board reported: "There are approximately 150 dwellings in Shepparton in which there are two or more families in residence. Of these dwellings 28 house at least 66 families consisting of 184 adults and 81 children. Four families live in tin sheds on their own land in the borough, but having bought the land they could not finance the building of a home. There are 89 river bank huts which house 121 adults and 77 children.

"In Mildura's township's area there are 295 dwellings of the river shack and humpy type. Built mainly of timber frame covered with bags, these shacks and humpies house about 1,000 people, of whom about half are children. The dwellings have been erected on river frontages and are subject to flooding. No regular system of sanitation has been provided."

The medical staff of the Victorian Education Department examined some of the school children at Shepparton and Mildura. It found that their general health and condition was worse than that of children in metropolitan slum areas. The doctors said this was due to their home life and living conditions in river shacks.

In its general report on housing in the inner suburban areas of Melbourne, the Board recorded its "horror and amazement at the deplorable conditions under which these thousands of men, women and children are compelled to exist."

The Board said: "Hundreds of houses contain small rooms, low and water-stained ceilings, damp and decaying walls, leaking roofs and rotten floors. Many are badly lighted, rat and vermin infested, and without proper ventilation. Inadequate sunlight, dampness, and lack of drainage render these shelters (which are not worthy of the name of dwelling) veritable plague spots, and heavy toll is being taken of the health of the occupants, particularly of the women and children.

"These houses, in many cases, are erected on "pocket handkerchief" allotments of inadequate depth and with meagre frontage to lanes, right-of-ways, so-called "places," alley ways and even wide streets, and are literally falling to pieces owing to neglect, decay and old age. Land has been so avariciously used in some instances that two or three houses have been erected on an area which was originally intended to be the backyard of a house facing a major street.

"Overcrowding on the site is extremely common and presents a serious menace not only to the health and well-being of the inhabitants, but also to the whole community."

The Board summed up:—

"The housing of the poor in the metropolitan area is a standing reproach to the State. . . . If slum reclamation by and through the State achieves no more than physical and moral salvation of the children in these areas, it will have more than justified any financial sacrifice involved. A Christian system cannot be reconciled with a society that continues to tolerate these appalling conditions. . . .

"Slum problem is the wage problem"

"Economically, the slum problem is the wage problem, and a solution must be found by either increasing the earnings of the persons concerned, and/or by providing lower rental dwellings."

Do you agree with this conclusion? Do you think it squares up with the facts taken from the Board's report?

An unofficial body, the Housing Council of New South Wales, has estimated that there are 2,000 acres of slums in Sydney. These slums house at least 120,000 people. The

Council selected the Chippendale ward of Redfern for particular examination. The Council found that:—

"With the growth of the city, factories have encroached more and more on this residential area. Houses are generally terraces or attached cottages. Most of them were built by jerry builders at the end of the last century, and they now constitute one of the worst slum areas of Sydney. Overcrowding occurs in many instances. In large families, dining rooms, etc., are often utilized as bedrooms. The segregation of sexes was found in all cases to be satisfactory. Interior walls are often damp and plaster and woodwork show signs of age. Even the most well-kept homes had the disadvantage of being cold and dark inside. Bathroom conveniences are generally situated in the laundry at the back of the house or under some cover in the backyard. In several instances people would not ask the landlord for a new bath, even when the old one was useless, for fear of being evicted. Conditions are often crude and inadequate."

An official report published by the New South Wales Housing Improvement Board in 1938 shows that 30,000 houses had been built in inner Sydney before there was any health control or supervision of building activities. These have long outlived their usefulness. Most are without dampcourses, are badly ventilated, lack adequate sunlight and open space, and contribute little to the comfort or well-being of the unfortunate tenants.

A Parliamentary Housing Conditions Investigations Committee reported in 1936 that there were areas within the City of Sydney and neighbouring municipalities in which housing conditions needed urgent Government action.

80-year-old buildings

In Woolloomooloo this Committee found that most buildings used for living in were 60 to 80 years old, were very dilapidated, in a bad state of repair, squalid, overcrowded and insanitary. The shops were in very old terrace houses, in poor repair, and badly ventilated. Backyards were small and dirty, and the smell was most objectionable. Two or more persons often occupied a single room and cooked over a gas-ring.

In Erskineville most of the houses were found to be unfit for occupation and fit only for demolition. Dampness was a serious menace. It would be impossible to rehouse Erskineville's present population in cottages because of its density, the Committee wrote. As a result of the Committee's recommendation, 56 flats were built on Erskineville Park.

Sydney's slums differ from those of Melbourne and Adelaide, which are usually in pockets and blind alleys. Its problem is mainly that of the extreme dilapidation of jerry-built terraces and weatherboard cottages. Houses, factories, stores, shops, timber yards, junk yards and stables are all jumbled together. Many of Sydney's houses never get direct sunlight because of their nearness to factories.

Some of Sydney's worst slum homes are over or behind shops, or are themselves boarded-up shops now used as residences. Food shops are often unhealthy, and their backyards are nauseating. It is rare to find a decent sized backyard, and rarer still, one that is in a decent condition. Junk of all kinds clutters slum backyards—old bedsteads, broken toys, discarded furniture, food scraps, and filth of all kinds, accumulated through the years.

The suburb of Newtown is typical of the lack of planning in inner industrial areas. Originally built on land filled in with garbage, Newtown is a mixed area of residences, shops, railway workshops, factories and warehouses. Houses are sometimes built on narrow lanes without verandahs and footpaths, and you step directly from the living room into the street.

Slums in South Australia

In 1940 the South Australian Parliamentary Building Act Inquiry Committee reported that in the city of Adelaide there were at least 1,000 houses which were unfit to live in; in the municipality of Port Adelaide about 400; and in the municipality of Hindmarsh 320.

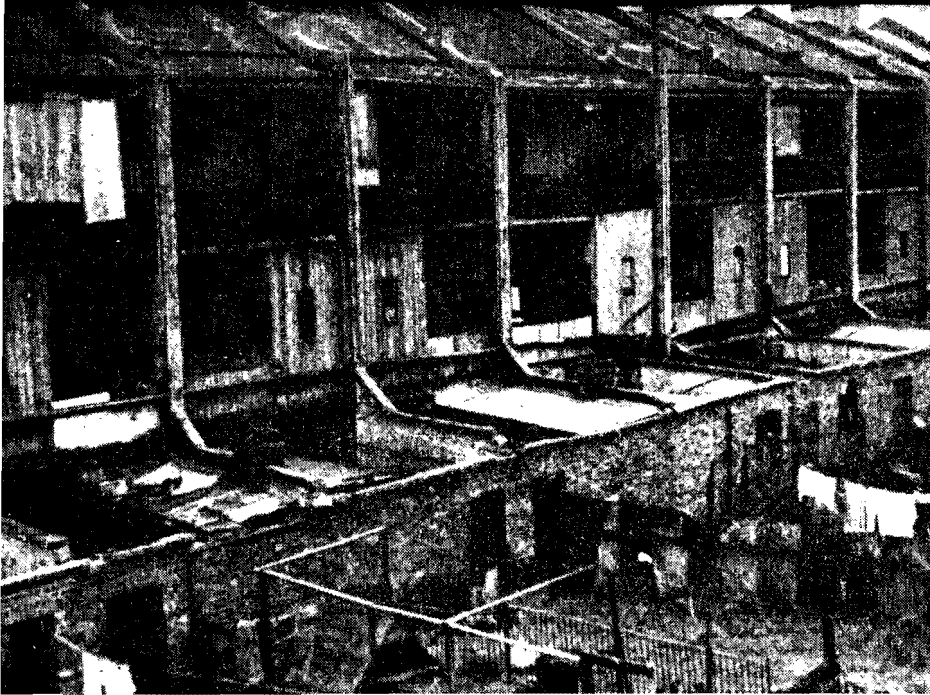
The Committee found that besides these 1,720 houses there were another 3,600 houses which it classed as sub-standard—only just fit to live in. More than 7,400 people live in the 1,720 houses and 13,300 in the 3,600 houses.

Inadequate natural lighting or ventilation, dampness, defective walls, floors or roofs, poor drainage, insufficient height of rooms, and vermin and rat infestation were reasons why the Committee condemned the 1,720 houses as being unfit to live in.

Of these sub-standard houses, four out of every five had unsound floors, one in every five was vermin-infested, one in every 16 was rat-infested, and two out of every three had defective water closets. W.C. buildings were often extremely dilapidated. Some cottages even had communal W.C. Nearly half had bathrooms that could not be used. Four out of five had no washbasins. Most had stoves, but one stove in every four was defective. Rents for these houses averaged 11/9 a week for three rooms, and 17/1 a week for five rooms.

Factory "blighting"

Many Adelaide houses, the Committee found, were in narrow lanes, alleys and cul-de-sacs, known as slum pockets. Many streets were too narrow. The Committee found many examples of factory "blighting." This happens when a residential area



This is a back view of a Paddington slum terrace.



Slum pocket at South Melbourne; density 49 houses to the acre.

SYDNEY SLUMS

This Redfern slum "jungle" is built on swampland reclaimed with garbage.



MELBOURNE SLUMS

These Carlton houses are behind other houses; their only link with the street a 10ft. lane.



is invaded by factories. Houses are knocked down and a factory built on the site. The factory overshadows adjoining houses. The noise, smell, dust and vibration cause the neighbourhood to deteriorate. Stables and marine store sheds cause the same thing.

There were also too many houses built on a given area. Rows of cottages were built on very small allotments; the houses were often badly lighted and ventilated. "These rows of cottages are the most depressing and unpromising type of housing encountered in the survey," the Committee says.

The houses are one room in width, with three rooms behind each other. In the middle room, the only light and ventilation can come from a skylight. The front doors open either directly on to the street or on a narrow verandah which abuts the street. Backyards are often no bigger than an ordinary sized room, with much of the yard space taken by a back verandah, W.C., outhouses, fowl-houses or bird-cages. Common to all yards is the amount of old iron or junk piled on top of outhouses or lying about.

We haven't detailed reports from the other States, but surface inspection shows that their conditions aren't any better. There isn't an Australian city or large town without bad housing conditions, amounting too often to plain slums.

Let's take stock

Where have we got to? Slum conditions exist throughout Australia. The people who live in them are too poor to live elsewhere. Surveys show that their incomes are far below the basic wage. In any case, there aren't enough houses to go round. Let's ask ourselves some questions. Do you think that these conditions are part of the natural order of society, or do you think that they could be improved? Should they be improved, anyway? Do people in the slums deserve to be assisted? Or is it their own fault that they live there, and could they raise themselves if they wanted to?

Bad housing causes ill-health, crime and child delinquency. Tuberculosis is a "house disease" and infant deaths are high in slums. Do slums cost too much?

Do bad housing conditions affect people adversely? We shall find that experts think so. They say that bad housing and ill-health go together; and social workers insist that bad housing, crime, dissoluteness and general lowering of standards are linked.

Here's what the New South Wales Director-General of Health says:—

"It is now generally held that damp, insanitary houses play a very important part towards the deterioration of the health of the inhabitants. Not only is the spread of intestinal diseases such as typhoid fever, epidemic diarrhoea of childhood, and dysentery favoured, but the chances of contracting debilitating diseases as tuberculosis and rheumatic fever are considerably enhanced. The moral outlook also is lowered, and with such lowering there follow in its train such diseases as syphilis, gonorrhoea and alcoholism, with their various indirect sequels such as imbecility and criminality."

President Roosevelt's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership reported in 1932 that housing has a clear, though indirect, relation to health. It added that the relation was so clear that some diseases, for example, tuberculosis, have been called "house diseases."

Other people point out that sickness and poverty are connected. Poor sanitation, malnutrition, lack of medical care, all interact with housing. Bad plumbing brings epidemic disease. Dilapidated dwellings may be infested by disease-carrying rats. Lack of sunlight can cause rickets.

A survey carried out in Detroit (U.S.) in 1920 showed that tuberculosis rates were two to three times higher in districts with more than one person to a room than those of districts with only .6 persons to a room. The same study showed that infant mortality was 50 per cent. greater in the overcrowded areas.

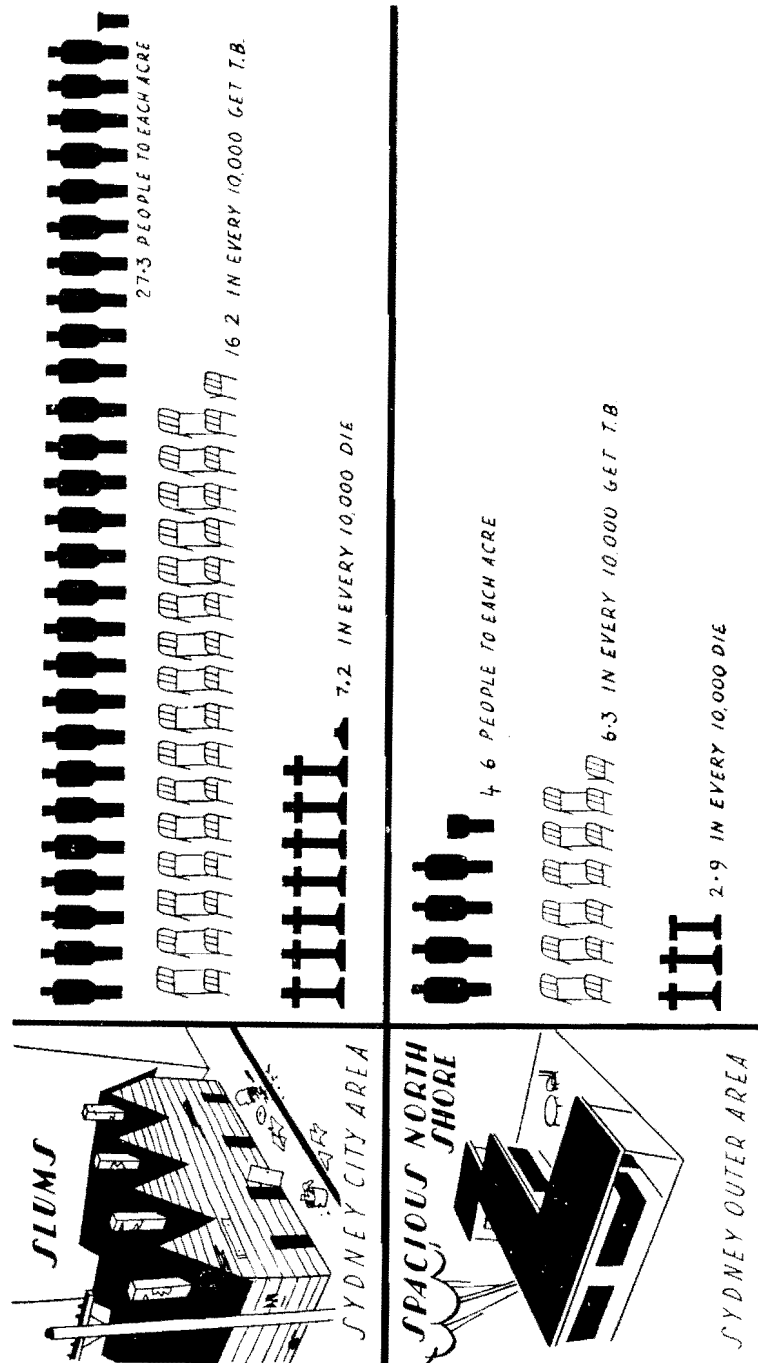
In 1938, the tuberculosis death rate for Manchester's slum area was 197 in each 100,000; for Manchester as a whole it was 104. At the Wythenshawe housing project, one of Manchester City Corporation's new developments, there were only 72 deaths per 100,000. In England's two famous garden cities (Welwyn and Litchworth) the figure fell to 38 and 57 respectively.

Death toll of slums

Infant mortality in the slum areas of Manchester was 120 per 1,000 live births; in Manchester as a whole it was 71 per 1,000; in Wythenshawe it was 60; and in the garden cities it was only 33 and 25 in every 1,000.

In Sydney, too, disease and the danger of death increase in poor housing areas. Sydney's main slum areas form a ring around the central commercial core of the city. They are generally much more densely populated than the more prosperous suburbs. Take the tuberculosis figures for five recent years. The city of Sydney has 27.3 persons to the acre. There were 16.2 cases and 7.2 deaths for every 10,000. In the good

CHILD DEATHS IN FIRST YEAR OF LIFE



Mr. Barnett found that most slum dwellers in Fitzroy were British born. Most had slum parents. This is important, as it means that they were born in the slums, and had not gone to live there because of economic necessity. But that factor had undoubtedly helped to keep them there. Mr. Barnett found that the majority of these people were slum-minded—that is, slovenly and vicious. Most did not earn enough to live on.

Four men in every five and one woman in every three were found to be heavy drinkers. One man in every three and one woman in every five had dissolute habits. Prostitution was rife. Many mothers were incompetent to care for their children. In 1932 in the Fitzroy area, 79 out of every 1,000 children died in the first year of life; in Camberwell, another Melbourne suburb, these deaths were only 35 in every 1,000 births.

Child delinquency flourishes in the slums. In Melbourne, in proportion to the population, the inner poor suburbs have three delinquent children to every one from the outer area. Three out of every five who come before the Children's Courts are under 15; most are charged with stealing.

Are these children inherently bad? Or do you think their behaviour is mostly the result of environment? If their surroundings are the cause, is it possible to reduce the delinquency, and consequently crime, in later life, by improving the environment?

In answer to these questions, Mr. Barnett says:

"We permit an environment to continue that is as fatal in its operation as the germs of typhoid, and then, with infinite care, we seek to protect society by quarantining the patient. The sensible thing is to remove the conditions which make for infection, as well as isolate the patient."

High cost of slums

What is the economic cost of slums? What does it cost a country to nurse people back to health once slum conditions have broken them down? What is the cost of maintaining law and order amongst the potential criminals in slums? No attempt has been made in Australia to answer these questions, but many official estimates have been made in America. Here are a couple of examples quoted by Dr. Edith Elmer Wood, a leading American authority on housing:

"In the summer of 1933 a study was made in Indianapolis (U.S.A.) Eleven census tracts with deteriorated housing near the centre of the city were picked as probable areas of greatest economic drain. With 10.4 per cent. of the population, they absorbed 30 per cent. of city hospital service during 1932 and furnished 24 per cent. of cases treated in the venereal disease clinic and 19.1 per cent. of patients at the hospital for the insane. The cost of putting out fires was 16.7 per cent. of the

total for the city. Residents of the district were responsible for 36 per cent. of what the city spent to arrest, try, and imprison felons, and almost 25 per cent. in the case of misdemeanants.

"A small area containing only 1,500 population was selected for further study. . . . The average per head cost of government in Indianapolis was \$38.56 (Australian £11/18/9). Within the area it was \$61.85 (Australian £19/3/-). The total cost of the area to Indianapolis taxpayers was \$92,775 (Australian £28,700), and its total contribution in taxes \$11,312 (Australian £3,501), leaving a deficit of \$81,462 (Australian £25,199).

"The annual per head excess of these slums—the amount by which their revenue fell short of their upkeep—was \$54 (Australian £16/4/-)"

In Cleveland (an American city the size of Melbourne) the annual income from taxes from one slum area was \$10.12 (Australian £3/2/8) a head. The cost of governing and looking after the slum was \$61.22 (Australian £18/19/-) a head. Adding what private charitable societies spent there, the total cost to the community to keep each family of four persons alive in that slum was \$315 (Australian £97/4/3) more than the community got in revenue from it.

Do these estimates of the economic cost of slums give a true picture? Or would you say that those Cleveland slum dwellers would be a drag on the community wherever they lived? Does Governor Lehman, of New York, put the problem best, "How can one measure in dollars and cents the great social cost of existing slums which breed disease, crime, unrest and human misery?"

Do you agree with Governor Lehman?

Do you think slums are too costly? If so, can a progressive post-war society permit such a liability to continue indefinitely?